

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

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E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: PFOR, OTRA, SV, NO, TGEN

SUBJECT:NORWEGIAN PRESS REPORT ON NANSEN ICE DRIFT STATION

REF: OSLO 1089

1. NANSEN ICE DRIFT STATION PROJECT, TENTATIVELY SCHEDULED
TO BEGIN IN LATE 1977, STILL ONLY IN PLANNING STAGE IN U.S.
SCIENTIFIC AND ACADEMIC COMMUNITY, ALTHOUGH WORK IS WELL
ADVANCED, AND THEREFORE NOT YET PUBLICIZED BY PLANNERS.

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THE POLAR RESEARCH BOARD OF THE NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

(NRC) IS FOCAL POINT FOR CURRENT STAGE OF PLANNING. CONCEPT IS TO PLACE A SHIP AS A SCIENTIFIC PLATFORM IN THE ARCTIC ICE PACK IN THE LAPTEV SEA TO DRIFT ACROSS THE ARCTIC OCEAN WITH THE ICE, EXITING BETWEEN GREENLAND AND SVALBARD (SPITSBERGEN) IN 2-3 YEARS. FINAL APPROVAL OF PLANS IS EXPECTED SOMETIME IN THE SECOND QUARTER OF CALENDAR 1976, AT WHICH TIME DEPARTMENT INTENDS TO INFORM GOVERNMENTS OF CIRCUM-ARCTIC COUNTRIES AND INVITE PARTICIPATION OF SCIENTISTS AND INSTITUTIONS OF THOSE COUNTRIES ON BASIS OF THE RELEVANCY AND SCIENTIFIC MERIT OF THEIR PROPOSED COOPERATIVE ACTIVITY AND SPACE AVAILABLE ON THE DRIFT PLATFORM (A DECOMMISSIONED USCGICEBREAKER). THE PLAN, IF APPROVED, IS FOR A CIVILIAN PROGRAM. ALL DATA ACQUIRED WILL

BE AVAILABLE TO THE WORLD SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY.

2. INFORMATION ON PROJECT IN NRC ANNOUNCEMENT OF SCIENTIFIC OPPORTUNITY, ADVANCE COPY OF WHICH GJELSVIK OF NORWEGIAN POLAR INSTITUTE HAS IN HIS POSSESSION, GIVES SUFFICIENT GENERAL INFORMATION FOR COMMENTS TO PRESS. HOWEVER, PUBLICATION OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT BY NRC IN APPROPRIATE INTERNATIONAL AND U.S. SCIENTIFIC JOURNALS HAS BEEN EMBARGOED AT REQUEST OF DEPARTMENT UNTIL PROJECT ACTUALLY APPROVED AND GOVERNMENTS OF CIRCUM-ARCTIC COUNTRIES NOTIFIED. GJELSVIK SHOULD BE SO INFORMED.

3. USE OF SVALBARD AS POSSIBLE STAGING POINT FOR LOGISTIC SUPPORT OF NANSEN ICE DRIFT STATION IS ONE OF THE ALTERNATIVES BEING CONSIDERED BY THE PROJECT PLANNERS. THE DEPARTMENT ENDORSES THIS ALTERNATIVE. EVENTUAL DECISION WILL BE MADE IN LATER PHASE OF DETAILED PLANNING, AND IMPLEMENTATION WILL OF COURSE BE DISCUSSED FIRST WITH GON, WHOSE CONCURRENCE WOULD BE SOUGHT. ACTUAL COMPLEMENT OF A POSSIBLE LOGISTIC STAGING POINT ON SVALBARD WOULD DEPEND, IN PART, ON U.S. SCIENTIFIC PROJECTS ON SVALBARD WHICH MIGHT RESULT FROM EXISTENCE OF THIS FACILITY. SIZE OF U.S. MANNING ALLEGED BY NORWEGIAN JOURNALIST UDGAARD (100-200 MEN) IS, IN ANY CASE, A GROSS EXAGGERATION. WHILE EXACT CALCULATION WOULD BE PREMATURE, REGULAR LOGISTIC SUPPORT PERSONNEL WOULD BE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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KEPT TO MINIMUM, PRACTICAL NUMBER, AND WOULD PROBABLY NOT EXCEED 6-10 AT MOST, NOT COUNTING SCIENTISTS AND CREW IN TRANSIT TO AND FROM ICE DRIFT STATION AT VARIOUS TIMES. DRIFT STATION EXPECTED TO HAVE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR 20-30 SCIENTISTS OF WHICH IT IS HOPED APPROXIMATELY 20 PERCENT AT ANY GIVEN TIME WOULD BE FROM OTHER CIRCUM-ARCTIC COUNTRIES.

4. EMBASSY MAY DRAW ON NRC DRAFT ANNOUNCEMENT AND PARAS
1 AND 3 ABOVE IF QUERIED.

5. WE WILL SHORTLY AIR POUCH BACKGROUND INFORMATION TO ALL
ADDRESSEES FOR USE WHEN GOVERNMENTS ARE TO BE INFORMED.
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